

Royal Ascot begins June 17

By Linda Laws
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Britain's most famous race meeting is June 17 - 20. A unique combination of Royal pageantry, spectacular fashions and good quality horse racing make Royal Ascot a popular event for both the regular race goer and the occasional punter.

History of Ascot

It was in 1711, while she was riding through the forest near Windsor Castle, that queen Anne saw the potential for a racecourse on a piece of land near the village of East Cote, now called Ascot. So the Royal Racecourse was born. This event is commemorated by the first race each year at modern Royal Ascot by a race named the Queen Anne Stakes.

In 1820, the first carriage procession for the Royal Family and their guests took place and this daily procession remains a central feature of Royal Ascot. Each day before racing, Her Majesty The Queen and other members of the Royal Family enter through the Golden Gates at the far end of the racecourse and travel the length of the course in their horse-drawn carriages.

The Royal connection is found in many of the race titles. The highlight of the first day is The St. James's Palace Stakes, first run in 1834. This is the top European mile race restricted to three-year-old colts and geldings and is usually contested by those horses that fared best in the English, Irish and French 2,000 guineas earlier in the season. A guinea is 21 shillings, a now obsolete currency value. Other races include the Coronation Stakes, The Gold Cup, the King's Stand Stakes and

The King Edward VII Stakes.

The Gold Cup is the highlight of the third day of the meeting (also known as Ladies' Day) and was first run in 1807. Run over 2.5 miles, it is one of the longest flat races in the calendar and the world's top race for stayers. It was originally worth 100 guineas with a sweepstake of 10 guineas. When Nicholas I of Russia visited Ascot Races in 1845, he presented a £500 plate known as the Emperor's Plate. This replaced the Gold Cup each year until 1854 when the Crimean War broke out.

The Royal Enclosure

The Royal Enclosure is restricted to people who have applied in advance and new applicants must be sponsored by existing Royal Enclosure badge holders who have attended more than eight times. Applications are processed by Her Majesty's representative from the Ascot Office in St. James's Palace, London. Morning dress must be worn by gentlemen and hats worn by ladies.

The Grandstand

The Grandstand also gives access to the Paddock and the Silver Ring which are the main public enclosures. There are no restrictions on admission to these enclosures. One of the most popular features in the Grandstand occurs at the Bandstand after racing. The band plays a repertoire of traditional British tunes to the accompaniment of loud and enthusiastic singing from a huge crowd.

Note: For this year, Grandstand tickets have been sold out for Thursday and Friday. Tickets go on sale on the first working day in January each year. For informa-



Courtesy photos

Fashion is one of the highlights of the Royal Ascot

tion, call (01344) 22211, or credit card hotline on (01344) 876456.

Course Enclosure

The Course Enclosure is located opposite the main stands and admission is just £2. This enclosure is very exposed so, if the weather is poor, this might not be the best option.

Royal Ascot Timetable

10:30 a.m.	Gates open
2 p.m.	The Royal Procession enters the racecourse at the Golden Gates and travels the length of the straight mile, passing in front of the stands
2:30 p.m.	First race
3:05 p.m.	Second race
3:45 p.m.	Third race
4:20 p.m.	Fourth race
4:55 p.m.	Fifth race
5:30 p.m.	Sixth race
5:45 p.m.	Music and singing at the Bandstand in the Grandstand enclosure

Admission prices for the Grandstand and Paddock are £34 and for the Silver Ring £7. It is £10 on Gold Cup Day or third day of racing.

Future Events at Ascot

☐ June Saturday – June 21. This is a day of flat racing in a more informal atmosphere.

☐ Diamond Day – July 26. This is sponsored by De Beers. The King George VI and The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Stakes is the all-aged middle distance championship of Europe.

☐ The Ascot Festival – Sept. 27 - 28.

☐ Ascot Jazz Festival – Aug. 7 - 9, featuring world-famous artists Elkie Brooks, Jools Holland and Incognito plus a fireworks display.



Horse races, such as the one shown here, are the focus of Royal Ascot.